

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: State Agency for Social Integration College

Study field: Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation

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Summary of the Assessment of the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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The State Agency for Social Integration College (hereinafter College or SIVA) offers a unique and highly valuable model of cooperation between public government institutions, combining health support, social integration, rehabilitation, and higher education. This integration provides a unique opportunity for disabled individuals to receive a comprehensive education that supports their specific needs and promotes their social integration. This approach is supported by collaboration with employers, who recognize the study field “Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation” and First level professional higher education study programme “Hotel Service Management” (code 41811) as a valuable asset in the market. The College's environment is characterized by individual support tailored to each student's disability, creating a cozy and supportive atmosphere where everyone knows each other, fostering communication and networking. This supportive environment is further enhanced by the highly motivated and dedicated support staff, including social workers, career counselors, and psychologists, who play a crucial role in the students' academic and personal development.

The teaching staff at the College is not only experienced but also committed to supporting students in developing their competencies, including research skills. Students are encouraged to write their qualification theses on industry-related topics based on empirical research, and during their internships, they conduct practical studies to investigate hotel service management problems and implement improvements. This hands-on approach ensures that students gain valuable practical experience and are well-prepared for their future careers. The institution has successfully established international contacts with similar institutions abroad, enhancing the educational experience and providing students with opportunities for international exposure.

Furthermore, the students and graduates express high satisfaction with their studies and the opportunities available to them. They appreciate the supportive nature of the lecturers, who are always willing to provide guidance and support. The strong network among students, fostered by the College's environment, is also highly valued, as it provides a sense of community and support. The employment of experienced industry professionals as guest lecturers ensures that students receive relevant and up-to-date knowledge, further enhancing the quality of education provided.

However, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the programme. One of the most pressing issues is the College's ability to attract students. The decreasing number of students threatens the viability of the study field and programme. The management team is expected to think more about the possibilities and necessary activities and support for the study field to attract new students. To address this, the College should develop a comprehensive marketing strategy that highlights the unique strengths of the programme and effectively promotes it to prospective students.

Another area of concern is the lack of methodological support for teachers, particularly in student-centered teaching and materials for disabled students. To improve the quality of education, the College should provide teachers with the necessary training and resources to effectively support all students, including those with disabilities or foreseen disabilities. Additionally, the level of field-oriented research and student involvement in research activities is low. There are no recent books on research methodology, despite the College's plans to develop research. To address this, the College should invest in research resources and encourage students and staff to engage in academic and applied research activities.

Institutionalized cooperation with employers is also lacking, preventing structured and regular industry collaboration. To improve this, the College should establish formal partnerships with industry stakeholders and develop a targeted development plan for the study field. This would ensure that the programme remains relevant to industry needs and provides students with valuable

opportunities for practical experience and employment. While employers appreciate SIVA students as interns, none currently employ graduates, and graduates are not working in the industry. Greater emphasis is needed on integration and post-graduation employment. The College should work closely with employers to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the job market and have opportunities for employment. Compliance with laws and regulations, especially the new professional standard, requires more thorough analysis. The College should conduct a detailed review of its programme to ensure compliance with all relevant standards and regulations.

Additionally, the principles for allocating funding to study programmes and research activities are unclear. Planning is overly centralized, with funding allocated primarily to immediate needs. To improve transparency and effectiveness, the College should establish clear funding allocation principles and involve lower levels of management in the planning process.

Accessibility of the premises and special software for visually impaired and disabled individuals needs improvement, though steps are being taken in this direction. The College should continue to invest in improving accessibility and ensure that all students have the necessary resources to succeed. Internationalization efforts are still in the early stages, with limited visibility for students and study methodologies. The College has just begun to utilize Erasmus+ opportunities and build an international network. To enhance internationalization, the College should establish cooperation agreements with foreign institutions and provide students with more information about international opportunities.

There is also a discrepancy between the programme title (management) and the qualification (organizer). To address this, the College should review and align the programme title and qualification to accurately reflect the content and objectives of the programme. Additionally, attendance at classes often affects the final grade, which is not in line with outcome-based learning principles. The College should revise its grading policies to ensure that they align with modern educational standards and promote outcome-based learning.

In summary, the College offers a supportive, unique, and valuable educational experience with good industry ties and dedicated staff. However, to ensure long-term success and sustainability, it must address several critical areas, including student recruitment, methodological support, research activities, industry collaboration, marketing, funding transparency, accessibility, internationalization, and regulatory compliance. By addressing these challenges, the College can continue to provide high-quality education and support to its students, helping them to succeed both academically and professionally.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The aim of the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Services, Tourism and Recreation" is to train highly qualified specialists in the field of hotel, restaurant and tourism service organization, providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences (SAR p.11). The aim of the study field has been clearly defined, but at the same time, it should be noted that this objective is very broad and general, especially considering that currently only one study programme in hospitality is being implemented in this field.

SIVA has very thoroughly considered and developed the Development and Investment Strategy 2021-2027 (Appendix 1 SIVA College strategy 2021-2027.docx). There are strategic directions and strategic objectives defined for the College (p. 5.-7.). However, the strategic objectives of the College are only partially reflected in the objectives of the study field (SAR p. 12). For example, the strategic objectives of the College include the objective "to promote the involvement of employers

and other stakeholders in the improvement of education processes” and “to ensure that students and teaching staff are involved in collaboration projects to promote research, mobility and exchange of experience”. These strategic goals of the College are not reflected in the overall study field goals. It can be argued that the aims of the study field are too general and repetitive (for ex., the 3rd and 5th objectives). More precise and concrete objectives of the study field would serve better for the development of the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Services, Tourism and Recreation" in the College.

It should be noted that, the college's mission, vision, values and development strategy are well defined, but could be more visibly communicated with its stakeholders. It would be recommended for the college to develop its own public webpage.

1.1.2. SIVA has analyzed its strengths and weaknesses and identified opportunities and threats which are reflected in the self-assessment report. With a view of alleviating the weaknesses and exploiting the defined opportunities, several activities are planned (SAR p.14). At least 3 different plans or activities are mentioned in the SAR (p. 14 - 15), thus it is not clear which activities are those that are specifically targeted at the development of the study field. For example, according to the SAR (p.14) the development plan of the study field is prepared. However, a detailed development plan for the study field has not been attached. There are a few activities outlined as a plan in the SAR (p.15). However, these activities referred to in the SAR do not stem from the implemented SWOT analysis. For example, no activity focuses on addressing the very diverse previous knowledge of the admittees (including in the IT field). This aspect has been pointed out as a weakness in the SWOT analysis and has been mentioned several times during the interviews with the lecturers. The SWOT matrix points to “Insufficient research work by lecturers” as a weakness. The plan stated in the SAR does not provide any activities on how to encourage lecturers to participate in research. In the meantime, the list, based on the SWOT matrix, includes an action plan for the College. Specific activities have been named, however no responsible persons and deadlines have been listed. Therefore, it is recommended to develop a single common and specific plan for the development of the study field, based on the SWOT analysis and stakeholders' feedback.

1.1.3. Information listed in the SAR (Attachment 19) provides the structure of the College as an organizational unit of the SIVA. This is logical and justified given the college's direct cooperation with other SIVA departments.

The structure of the College is horizontal, where all support staff and management positions are at the same level. The effectiveness of the structure for the development of the study field could be discussed. However, it should be noted that, according to information stated in interviews, the daily activities of administrative and support staff in the implementation of the study programme can be regarded as coordinated and good. Support during implementation of the study programme is provided by two structures - the IT department and the Vocational Rehabilitation Support Department (SAR p.16 and Attachment 19). It is stated that the Programme Director “works directly with social workers, librarians, administrators and career support experts to make the study process more efficient” (SAR p.16). However, the information provided in the SAR and the subsequent interview conducted did not make explicitly clear if this cooperation has been institutionalized. On the basis of the documents submitted and opinions expressed during the interviews, there is no certainty as to the effectiveness of the structure to ensure the development of the study field. For example, the structure does not institutionalize collaboration with the industry, which represents an essential element for the development of the study field.

There are no formal positions/responsible persons for the management of the study field at the College. Study programmes are managed by study programme directors (not responsible for the study field).

According to the information stated in the SAR (p.15), the study programme director has broad

responsibilities. Some of the duties are listed as direct responsibilities of the director, while some others - as "participation" in an activity (for ex., "Participate in study planning, selection of academic staff"). It is not entirely clear from the description provided by the SAR and from information acquired during interviews, as to who is directly responsible for these tasks or how the actual cooperation takes place. Some of the duties listed in the SAR are very general (for ex., "Manage the study programme "Hotel Service Management"). Overall, unfortunately, it cannot be concluded that the duties and responsibilities of the director of the study programme are clearly defined and focused on the development of the programme.

As it can be concluded from interviews during the on-site visit, significant emphasis in the implementation of the study programme is put on the operation of the Council for Research and Methodology. According to the "SISA College Rules of the Research and Methodological Council.docx" (Appendix 3), the tasks of the Council include both - developing strategic proposals (for ex., opening a new study programme) as well making operational decisions regarding all study programmes (for ex., approving the topics for qualification papers; making a decision regarding postponing the date of the test for the student). During the interviews and based on documents, it was not possible to obtain complete assurance that the Council's work on the strategic issues and the development of study field and study programme was effective.

1.1.4. Students are matriculated in accordance with the "Admission Rules for Studies at the Social Integration State Agency College" (Appendix 13). The regulation envisages both - the process and the requirements for admission. Information regarding admission is stated on the web page of the College (<https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/koledza>).

The admission procedures of students and the requirements for studies at the later study stage are defined at the College's internal regulations "Procedure for Starting Studies at Later Stages" (Appendix. 23). The procedure and the requirements have been stated clearly, they are logical and understandable. Information on the opportunities to join the study programme at a later study stage is published on the SIVA web page. However, it should be noted that only the official regulations of the college are available on the website, which are not always user friendly and easy to perceive. Plus, they're not easy to find on the overall SIVA web page.

According to the information, stated in the SAR (p. 18), so far there have been no submissions regarding the recognition of non-formal education within the field of study.

During the visit, the students and graduates pointed out that the College has challenges posed by limited marketing activities, as - they all found out about the SIVA study opportunity from the State Employment Agency. This area needs to be developed more actively, with even closer cooperation with various organizations in the field, to attract more applicants in the future. One of the graduates also mentioned the possible better collaboration options with the Latvian Society of the Blind, whether there might be people with visual impairment interested in studies, but the information does not reach them.

1.1.5. The methods, principles and procedures for assessing achievements of students have been stated in the internal regulation "The Procedure for Testing and Evaluation of Knowledge of the Students of the Social Integration State Agency College" (Appendix 14) and at the syllabus of every study course. The Regulation establishes the procedure for organizing tests and possible forms of tests, as well as the main principles of evaluation of students' knowledge. The overall evaluation principles are described in 30 points. One of the points (point no. 32 in the Regulation) states that "If the student has attended at least 75% of the contact lectures of the study course, the teacher may exempt the student from taking the final test of the study course". The practice of exempting a student from an exam based on attendance of classes also was confirmed by lecturers during interviews. The syllabuses of almost all study courses (Appendix "Course descriptions VS EN.zip") also foresee attendance of classes as one of the criteria of evaluating the performance of students.

According to lecturers, this practice is correct and relevant to college student profiles (the target market of the College). Understanding health issues of the College students and the required individual approach for each student, however, it should be noted that the acquisition of the learning outcomes of the study course on the basis of attendance is not objectively correct. Learning outcome based studies and assessment require without exception, that the student results (grades) base only on their level of knowledge and skills (achieved learning outcomes) not on any formal aspects (eg. attendance or timeliness). As noted in many EU level higher education guidelines and other support documents, it is highly recommended to use learning outcome based assessment (eg. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Using_learning_outcomes.pdf).

After evaluating the types of assessment referred to in the study course descriptions (Appendix "Course descriptions VS EN.zip"), it can be concluded that in ~ 68% of cases the final study course examination is conducted in the form of a pass - fail test, which does not reflect the specific level of competence attained by the student in the study course. It would be advisable to review the type of final examination in many study courses in order to provide the quality of studies.

To summarize - in practice, one would expect a higher degree of evidence confirming that the assessment of students' performance is based on exclusively objective assessment methods and reflects the true level of knowledge and skills of a student in a particular study course. The achievement of the expected results defined in the study programme and the acquisition of the competence specified in the standard by the profession are of key importance and, while believing that this is the case at the College and the particular study programme, one would expect that it is also reflected more unequivocally in the relevant documents.

The College has approved the "Procedure for Testing and Assessment of Students' Knowledge of the State Agency for Social Integration" (<https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/media/1093/download?attachment>), however, after reading it and checking the course descriptions (Appendix Course/module descriptions), it is observed that the current procedure for assessment of students' results is incomplete. Paragraph 22 of the above-mentioned procedure states that the assessment of a course of study is the final examination, which according to paragraph 9 of the procedure is a test or exam; in addition, paragraph 32 states that if a student has attended 75% of the contact hours, he/she may be exempted from the final examination. In general, with the situation that attendance is included as a criterion for the final assessment in almost all course descriptions, this creates the risk of non-compliance with a number of the basic principles of assessment laid down in point 55 of the Standard, in particular the principle of aggregation of positive achievements (only the final examination, based on the procedure, constitutes the final assessment).

An additional concern for the objective assessment of students' knowledge is that 68% (or 43% of the credit points to be obtained, excluding internships and qualification work) of the study courses require that the final examination be marked "Pass"/"Fail", whereas according to the procedure, the mark "Pass" can be obtained if the student has fulfilled at least 40% of the criteria of the examination. The College needs to review its current procedures, methodologies and clarify the requirements in the course descriptions in order to truly incorporate assessment principles and requirements that objectively confirm, through a variety of meaningful testing methods, the level of knowledge and professional skills of the students, both in the College's regulatory documents and in the course descriptions.

1.1.6. The principles of academic integrity are stated in the internal document "The Rules on Academic Integrity at the Social Integration State Agency College" (Appendix No 24), which include the ethical aspects of research and the consequences of non-compliance. Another study process regulation ("The Procedure for the Development and Defence of College Qualification Theses of the Social Integration State Agency") also includes the aspects of importance of academic honesty. It should be noted, however, that at this point the College regulations have insufficient dissuasive procedures for cases where AI is used.

According to the SAR (p. 20), the College informs and educates students about academic integrity issues in various ways already starting from the first study semester. There are procedures stated in the Regulation regarding steps that should be taken by the lecturer if plagiarism is found ("The Procedure for Examination and Assessment of Students' Knowledge").

The College is a subscriber to the University of Latvia's unified computer-based plagiarism control system. However, it should be noted that this may not be sufficient and appropriate, in particular as regards the examination of the work submitted in the study courses, as well as for the checking of the use of AI. It is recommended that the College find an opportunity to buy another, more thorough plagiarism control system (e.g. CAPS).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

A college, whose target market is people with disabilities, is integrated into the overall SIVA structure, thus ensuring a comprehensive service delivery. On the basis of the documents submitted and, above all, on the basis of the interviews, it has to be concluded that student support functions are sometimes more important than education. Undoubtedly, support services for college students are very important for them to be able to learn, but a balance is needed to acquire qualitative education.

The College has developed a comprehensive development strategy, but it is desirable to include a more detailed vision for the development of the study field. Currently one study programme is included in the study field. On the basis of the interviews, it was possible to suspect that another programme would be opened in the future, but this is not reflected in any of the documents (plans) of the college, thus it cannot be considered as an aspect of the development of the current study field.

The structure of the College is horizontal, where all support staff and management positions are at the same level. This is not unequivocally seen as a bad approach, but as emerged from interviews, it does not always allow the most relevant decisions to be made and it is unclear which official is in charge of taking decisions.

There is a detailed document where the assessment system and procedure are stated. The type of evaluation of each study course and the percentage distribution thereof are also stated in the study course descriptions (syllabus). However, it should be noted that, according to experts, the evaluation criteria should be based exclusively on an objective examination of knowledge and skills, excluding the attendance of classes from the evaluation criteria.

Strengths:

1. A well-defined and developed College development strategy that reflects the SIVA's projected development by 2027.
2. Integration of the College in the SIVA structure in general can lead to more comprehensive service provision for students.
3. There are procedures and requirements developed regarding admission of students, including admission at the later study stages.
4. The college has a well-designed policy of adherence to academic honesty. Students are being regularly and diversely informed about the principles of academic integrity.

Weaknesses:

1. The objectives of the study field only partially strives from the objectives of the College. They are too general and ambiguous.
2. There is no united and concrete plan for the development of the study field based on the aspects mentioned in the SWOT matrix, where the persons/departments responsible and the deadline for

completion are defined.

3. There are no responsible persons for the development of the study field.
4. The assessment of students' performance currently leaves too much room for subjective evaluation. While the attendance is important it can not be one of the assessment criteria.
5. The policy towards use of AI in the study process has not been sufficiently developed.
6. The information about the study possibilities do not reach the potential target group.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. Experts ascertained through documents scrutiny and interviews that SIVA established a quality policy, they maintain their quality management system in accordance with the requirements of the European Standard ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS), the Guiding Principles and the requirements set out in the Agency's Customer Service Manual. SIVA's director approves the annual QMS audit plan. The audit reports include the nonconformities found and identify corrective measures to address them. Unfortunately, the quality policy and related documents are not publicly available.

SIVA has established and regularly conducts quality checks on the implementation process of the college's study programmes to achieve study field objectives and task implementation. Responsible persons have been identified for conducting these inspections. Additionally, a customer satisfaction survey on received rehabilitation services has been conducted. The results of these surveys have been collected, analyzed, and presented, leading to the identification of actions aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction (see Annex No. 11).

The procedures warrant the continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and its related programme.

1.2.2. The mechanism for the creation and internal approval of the study programmes of SIVA is visible from QMS process P02 Implementation of Short cycle vocational higher education programmes (subprocesses P02.1-P02.5), from P02.1 Developing and updating study programmes, and P02.2 Planning the study process. They are collecting the feedback through regular surveys with students and graduates (six months after the graduation) and through events with employers (brunch). Also the reports from students' internships are a valuable source of information about the students' knowledge and skills.

Documents related to the quality policy are accessible only on the SIVA's internal website and available for internal stakeholders. The procedures are logical and efficient, based on the checked documents.

1.2.3. According to the internal regulation, students have the right to submit suggestions and complaints, orally or in writing, to the Head of the College, the Deputy Director for Vocational Rehabilitation, or the Agency Director. These submissions will be reviewed in accordance with the law, "Procedure for Consideration of Applications, Complaints, and Suggestions in State and Local Government Institutions," as well as the Agency's internal regulations, "Regulations on Academic Integrity at the Social Integration State Agency College" (Annex No. 24).

Upon commencing their studies at the College, students are required to sign a Study Agreement. This agreement outlines the conditions for resolving conflicts and disputes, as well as the obligations and rights of the students. Additionally, students are informed about the internal regulations and work safety rules.

The College has a Student Council that gathers students' suggestions and complaints and submits proposals to the College management. Students can submit their suggestions and complaints in writing via a designated suggestion box, electronically by email, or in writing to the College Office

Administrator or the Agency's Registry.

Students expressed the opinion last year that another course would be more beneficial for them instead the planned one (Tourism around the world; they think that they could learn the topics on their own if they would be interested, they liked one teacher and wanted another course with her) and started negotiation with management (first with their social worker which is also their group leader and later with the programme management), they succeeded and got approved another course.

1.2.4. The College compiles statistical data in the Vocational Rehabilitation Information System (PRIS). PRIS includes basic student information (personal data, disability status, photo, etc.), details about eligibility assessments, and information related to the study process (orders, decisions, etc.). It also contains input from specialists providing vocational rehabilitation services, such as doctors, psychologists, career support experts, and social workers. PRIS aggregates statistical data by study group, age group, disability, and place of residence. To gather employment data, the College surveys graduates or requests information from the State Revenue Service and the State Employment Agency. In compliance with external regulations, all necessary information is managed within the National Education Information System (VIIS).

They are using the E-class system to record and accumulate information on students' grades, attendance, course content, and summaries of grades and absences. Starting in the 2024/2025 academic year, the College plans to transition to a single e-learning environment, Moodle, with the transition process currently underway. Since 2022, the College has also been using the Future Internship platform (www.edy365.com - Latvian only) to organize internships. This platform collects information on the progress and results of students' internships, including assessments of students' skills and employers' evaluations of how well students' theoretical and practical knowledge meet labor market requirements.

The College's Vocational Rehabilitation Support Committee meets monthly to analyze the achievement of performance indicators, student progression, and enrollment numbers.

To evaluate the satisfaction of College graduates and employers with the study programme's content and outcomes, as well as the quality of the study process organization and to gather suggestions for programme improvement, surveys of employers (Annex No. 25) and College graduates (Annex No. 26) are conducted once per academic year. Additionally, a survey of College students (Annex No. 27) is conducted after the completion of each study course.

Data is being collected, but it could be somehow confusing that different data are being collected on different platforms as the students' data are in one database, grades in another, studies are supported by the third platform and all the documents are in another one. It might be advisable to combine platforms, use a single one.

1.2.5. The College does not have its own independent website since it is a unit of the Agency. Instead, it utilizes the Agency's website, www.siva.gov.lv. The College section can be accessed at <http://www.siva.gov.lv/koledza.html>, and the e-learning environment is available in Latvian language at <http://koledza.siva.gov.lv/moodle/>. Not all the necessary information is being presented on their website and is not publicly available. There is no publicly available information on the quality policy, and study programme content is not presented openly to all the stakeholders.

The information available in the E-platform of the Higher Education Quality Agency (AIKA) and in the database of the State Education Information System (VIIS) needs to be updated, currently there are discrepancies with the information submitted for accreditation - type of study programme, duration of implementation between types (full-time and part-time), indicating credits after the transition to the ECTS system. In addition, this information needs to be reconciled with the information available on the SIVA website (<https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/viesnicu-pakalpojumu-organizators> and <https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/siva-koledzas-isa-cikla-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-programmas>),

which currently does not indicate that the study programme is also implemented as a full-time study programme. In the future, more information could be added to the website about the content of the study programme - measures and learning outcomes, information about the courses to be covered, case studies from students and alumni.

In general, the information on these platforms is available in Latvian, which is also the language of delivery of the study programme, but there are differences between them that need to be addressed in the future.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

College has established quality policy, they maintain their quality management system in accordance with the requirements of the European Standard ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS), the Guiding Principles and the requirements set out in the Agency's Customer Service Manual. SIVA's director approves the annual QMS audit plan.

The procedures for developing and reviewing study programmes within the field, as well as the feedback mechanisms — including feedback to students, employers, and graduates — are clearly defined. The institution should bring all the existing platforms into one (or at least integrated) platform. Students have confirmed that the mechanism developed for submitting complaints and suggestions is effective, encourages the implementation of improvements, ensures students are informed about the opportunity, and provides feedback. The College does not maintain its own independent website as it operates under the auspices of the Agency. Instead, it utilizes the Agency's website.

Strengths:

1. Quality assurance procedures warrant the continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and its related programme

Weaknesses:

1. The college has little influence on the website content management, since it uses the SIVA's website, where there is no publicly available information on the quality policy, and study programme content is not presented openly to all the stakeholders.

2. Scattered platforms for gathering data.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The procedures warrant the continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and its related programme, but there are some areas that need further improvements.

- 2 1.1 - The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SIVA has established policy and procedures for the assurance of the college's study programmes quality, in order to achieve study field objectives and task implementation.

- 3 1.2 - A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Development and internal approval of the study programmes of the college is present but the periodic inspection thereof doesn't show in the documents.

- 4 1.3 - The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and published.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is a detailed document, which regulates the process and system of assessment in the College. However, some assessment principles are not in line with the outcome based principles.

- 5 1.4 - Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The quality assurance procedures and mechanisms have been developed.

- 6 1.5 - The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The statistical data collection mechanism established by the college is efficient and ensures regular collection and analysis of information, but not all the necessary information is being presented on their website and is not publicly available.

- 7 1.6 - The higher education institution/ college ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

It has been deduced that SIVA college ensures continuous improvement through the implementation of the quality assurance system in a satisfactory manner.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. The total funding of the College is mainly provided by a 99.5% state budget grant and 0.5% from tuition fees (SAR, p. 26). The budget is centrally planned by the SIVA Finance Department. In addition, the amount of SIVA's income, including tuition fees for study programmes, various fee-based services related to the study process (issuance of statements, settlement of academic debts, etc.) is determined by an external normative act - Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1002 of 24 September 2013 "Price List of Fee-based Services of the State Agency for Social Integration". The financial autonomy of the College is limited, as the College is a unit of the direct state administration. This raises concerns about the financial autonomy of the educational institution, as in principle all fee revenues (including those of the educational institution) are determined not directly by the institution itself, but by the national Cabinet of Ministers. The SAR describes that overall the financial situation of the college is stable and the budget is planned for the medium term - 3 years.

The tuition fee for part-time studies in the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation" is set at EUR 1731.96, it should be noted that this price list does not

specify what the tuition fee would be if a potential student wanted to study in a full-time form of studies in place of paid studies.

On page 27 of the SAR, the College calculates the cost of a group of 10 students for full-time and part-time studies as EUR 24 424.02 and EUR 15 807.60 per year for full-time and part-time studies respectively, resulting in an annual cost per full-time student of EUR 2442.40 and per part-time student of EUR 1580.80.

During the expert group on-site visit, it was indicated that the optimal target is a group of 10 students, however, it was not ensured that clear calculations have been made to determine the minimum number of students required. During the meeting with the college management, the experts were informed that the decision to open a full-time or part-time group in a given academic year is taken before the start of the semester, adapting the situation to the specific applicants, their health situation and their employment, rather than it being fixed in advance and the students adapting to the situation. Depending on the enrollment situation, groups of 5-6 students might also be opened.

During the visit, meetings with various stakeholders involved in the management and implementation of the study field did not provide assurance that SIVA has a clear procedure in place that is understandable to the stakeholders (administration staff, study field and programme management, academic staff) on how funding is allocated and planned for the study field/programmes, as well as how funding is planned for the development of specific study programmes and for the improvement of the material and technical base. The information gathered during the visit suggests that finances are planned centrally, with no clear feedback as to why funding has or has not been allocated to specific activities, and primarily planned for the most pressing needs of the college.

As regards the system for funding scientific research, applied research and artistic creativity, the information available on page 28 of the SAR shows that separate funding for scientific and research activities in the College is only provided from the end of 2023. This funding is planned to be allocated to the improvement of the qualifications of the College's teaching staff, scientific publications of the teaching staff and the replenishment of the material and technical base in the amount of EUR 6267.00. During the experts' visit it was confirmed that the support and promotion of research activities in the College is at a very early stage of development. Until the end of 2023, research activities were tried to be covered within the existing funding or through different cooperation formats with partners, such as participation in conferences and events organised by them. Unfortunately, even for the currently available funding, there is no clear procedure on how and according to which criteria it will be used, academic staff and programme management are aware that it is available, but do not really know how to apply for it or what it will be used for.

Overall, at the moment it seems that the funding of scientific and research activities at the college is at a very early stage of development, the system for allocating and planning funding for specific study fields is not established and is planned for the college as a whole, this system is not strictly regulated and the parties involved are poorly informed about it.

1.3.2. The study process at SIVA is carried out in several separate buildings, one of which was closed at the time of the experts' visit for renovation and repairs to improve environmental accessibility. The other buildings in which the study process takes place have comfortable classrooms, with an average number of 18 workstations, which are adapted to the study process by providing the necessary technical solutions. The College also has several computer rooms equipped with different software for both study needs and for persons with disabilities, such as specialised software for adaptive technology and input/output equipment for persons with visual impairments. The classrooms are mostly located on the ground floor, with wide corridors, ramps and lifts in buildings with several floors. However, there is still potential to improve the accessibility of the infrastructure environment by adapting it for people with different types of disabilities, such as visual impairments,

improving their ability to move easily around the College premises.

The College also provides dormitories for students, which are divided into two buildings. One, which also houses the library, some classrooms and specially adapted dormitories for people with more severe disabilities, is relatively close to the other academic buildings. There is a second dormitory two kilometers away which can accommodate other students. In addition the College provides students with special transport, various support staff (social workers, career counselors, psychologists, etc.).

The library has a number of computers for students' independent work and is also adapted for the visually impaired. Students have the possibility to obtain laptops from the College for remote studying upon special application, which, as stated by the alumni during the expert visit, was especially actively used during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the whole study process was organised remotely. During the expert visit, the stakeholders (academic staff, students and alumni) generally appreciated the infrastructure available at the College. However, it should be pointed out that the College could develop more in the future the infrastructure and material support (including special software) that is specifically designed for the needs of this study field and study programme.

Although SIVA indicated both in the self-assessment report (p. 29) and during the expert meeting with the College management that the material, informational and methodological base is regularly updated, there was no assurance that a systematic, clear approach/procedure was in place and that this was communicated to the stakeholders.

1.3.3. SIVA indicated both in the self-assessment report (p. 29) and during the expert meeting with the College management that the material, informational and methodological base is regularly updated, although there was no assurance that a systematic, clear approach/procedure was in place and that this was communicated to the stakeholders. As part of the SIVA quality management system there is a process scheme "Ensuring the work of the College's library", which was confirmed during the experts' visit is working well, however it would be advisable to improve the process of how study programme directors learn about the amount of resources available in a particular year and the criteria for deciding which new literature and database subscriptions will be funded, to reduce the risk of situations where, for example, a new literature purchase is requested but ends up not being made and the reasons are not fully clear.

In addition, the expert team found that it would be advisable in the future to develop and improve the College's capacity to provide methodological support directly for academic staff in the context of the study process, for example in the areas of student-centred, innovative teaching methods, working with people with different types of disabilities. It would also be desirable to introduce clearer guidelines for academic staff on how they can apply for the development of new teaching resources (not only literature, but e.g. specific software, materials, etc.) for the study process.

The library has the necessary literature for the implementation of the study field, but it would be desirable to further develop it by acquiring more up-to-date literature in the field, as well as materials to support students in their research work. During the experts' visit to the College library, it was noted that students currently make relatively little use of the possibilities offered by databases and that further education on their use and potential would be welcome. The library has rather limited working hours and it would be advisable to assess with academic staff and students whether the current library working hours meet their needs or whether they could be improved in order to improve accessibility for all stakeholders. One of the reasons for the relatively low use of digital resources by students is their low digital literacy and English language skills, which was pointed out by both academic staff and students during the expert visit, and it would be advisable to find ways to improve this situation.

1.3.4. The College uses several information systems to organise and support the study process. The "E-class" tool is actively used for students' schedule of classes, communication among each other,

students' evaluations; it is positively evaluated by both students and academic staff.

In addition, an internal information system is available on the College's internal network and via a VPN connection, where various documents and regulations can be accessed; this system was also demonstrated in operation during the experts' visit. There are concerns about the ability of students with less digital skills to successfully connect to it, for example from home, so it would be valuable to provide them and other stakeholders with detailed instructions on how to do so.

The Moodle solution is mainly used for the organisation of study courses. Although SIVA claims that Moodle contains information on all the courses it runs - course descriptions, study materials, assignments and practical work, etc. (SAR, p. 30), however, during the Moodle demonstration it was evident that it is not available for all study courses, that several courses have used monotonous teaching methods and materials, and that it would be advisable to improve the skills of academic staff to use the various possibilities offered by this tool, for example, by introducing not only uploading presentations, but also various more interactive solutions, for example, by using both Moodle's built-in features more actively and by testing new Moodle plugins such as H5P technologies, which could significantly enrich the learning experience of students in the future. As the representatives of the college administration pointed out during the expert visit, the Moodle platform is planned to be used much more actively in the study process in the future, so it is particularly important to provide training for both academic staff and students on how to use and operate it.

An additional problem identified during the assessment visit to the College is the low motivation of some lecturers to create learning materials and upload them to the Moodle platform. Therefore the administrative staff of the College need to be particularly careful to ensure that this is fully done and provided to students in all study courses. This is caused by both the relatively low workload of lecturers in the college and the lack of motivation, making it a future challenge that the college needs to address more proactively. It should be noted that currently the college does not have guidelines for the development of study materials for students with disabilities and it would be useful to introduce such guidelines in the future in order to facilitate the work of academic staff and improve the quality of study materials for students.

In addition to formal communication channels, informal communication platforms such as WhatsApp course chats are also actively used, with the participation of the college social worker, who is able to ensure communication with students there in an expeditious manner. Overall, students were positive about the information solutions and communication platforms available.

Zoom and the E-Class platform are used to organise distance learning. The College has a Zoom licence and lecturers have the possibility to receive special Zoom links, as the experts were informed by the representatives of the College during the on-site visit: the College has 5 access links available, which are issued to academic staff upon request in the form of an application. This approach raises concerns about additional administrative burdens and it would therefore be valuable to look at solutions that do not involve intermediaries to provide remote access to studies.

In the future, it would be useful to evaluate the possibility of the College introducing the option of providing students with access to various special software, such as JAWS software specifically designed for visually impaired persons, this type of technological support could increase the pool of persons who would choose to study at the college in the future by assessing the suitability of studies for their specific needs.

1.3.5. The College has established internal rules "Regulations on Administrative and Academic Positions at the College of the State Agency for Social Integration", which regulates the staff selection process, requirements for various academic positions and other binding aspects (Other Annexes, Annex 8). These Regulations, as well as other key documents regulating the work and study process of the College, are publicly available in Latvian on the SIVA website: <https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/par-izglitibas-procesu-koledza>. In addition, information on the

remuneration of staff and information on allowances, bonuses and gratuities is also published on the SIVA website (<https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/informacija-par-atlidzibu>).

The posts are openly advertised and published on the SIVA website (<https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/vakances>), on social networks and in the Latvian Gazette, where they are accessible to interested parties. The Director of Studies plays a major role in approaching and selecting potential academics to participate in the competition, as he identifies vacancies for academic staff. The selection and evaluation of academic staff is organised by the SIVA Human Resources and Records Management Unit, the Head of College is also involved in this process, and elections for academic posts are organised and held by the College Council. As the College states on page 32 of the SAR, in order to assess the professionalism and motivation of the academic staff, the employment relationship is initially initiated as a guest lecturer, after which, having ascertained the quality of the work, promotion to a permanent employment relationship - election of academic staff - is considered.

For new lecturers, as indicated by the College administration during the experts' visit, onboarding meetings are organised to provide them with basic training on working in the College, its regulatory documents and working with its information systems.

A review of the available evidence indicates that SIVA has defined, implemented and followed procedures and recruitment procedures for the study field and the corresponding study programmes for attracting qualified teaching staff. Observing all provided data and SAR, as well as SIVA webpage the Expert Group confirms that these procedures are open and the stakeholders involved are informed about them.

1.3.6. The College SAR on pages 32-33 indicates a number of activities for professional development of academic staff, both in events organised by the College itself and in events organised by the College's partners, such as the Latvian Association of Colleges. In addition, it should be noted that all academic staff members receive mandatory training and briefings on work safety, fire safety and IT security aspects, especially taking into account the specificities of the college and its students. Information on professional development opportunities for academic staff is sent out in e-mails and on the "E-Class" platform, and 2-3 times a year the College organises extended meetings with lecturers, where they exchange updates and are asked to inform about their needs - technical, material, didactic support (information obtained during the experts' visit). During the experts' visit, the academic staff indicated that the College also organises performance evaluations of lecturers, which are recorded in a special protocol; the results of these evaluations are used for the exchange of experience in order to promote the motivation and qualification of lecturers.

In addition, the College's efforts to develop the exchange of teaching staff experiences through Erasmus+ projects are to be welcomed, but it should be noted that this area is at a relatively early stage of development and has great potential for further development in the future.

Although the opportunities available to them are positively perceived by the teaching staff, it should be noted that the challenge for more active involvement and proactive initiative for many teaching staff, as pointed out by the teaching staff during the expert visit, is the relatively low workload at the College, as well as the fact that many of them are also employed in other educational institutions.

In general, the College is developing and, to the extent possible, trying to support the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff, but this could be improved through more targeted and regular activities, for example in the areas of new teaching methods, student-centred learning, innovative teaching and learning methods, as well as by introducing clearer mechanisms for evaluating the results and effectiveness of the activities implemented.

1.3.7. There are 14 lecturers involved in the implementation of the study field and its corresponding study programme: 7 of them are elected academic staff and 7 are guest lecturers (SAR, p. 33), 94% of the academic staff work part-time at the College. As stated in the SAR: "The workload of the

academic staff is reflected in the tariff sheet, which is created according to the study plan. The planning and tariff sheet of the college study process is carried out by the College education methodologist, who monitors the workload of teaching staff". In general, this planning of workloads according to the study plan is a normal academic practice, but it is not clear what other duties are included in the workload of academic staff in addition to teaching courses. The SAR indicates that, in addition to delivering courses, academic staff are involved in organising student research (supervising students' qualifying work), preparing publications and presenting at conferences. However, it would be useful to establish a procedure or methodology that clearly indicates exactly which tasks are included in the workload of academic staff. Given that the College is currently slowly developing its research activities, employment in research positions would be an area for future development. As pointed out by the academic staff during the expert visit, they have relatively small teaching workloads at the College, which also poses a number of challenges - low motivation to engage in the daily life of the College, to develop new teaching materials or to improve existing ones - but they would be open to the possibility of increasing them and recognise that more contact hours with students would also be beneficial for the quality of the study process. This is an important challenge for the future in considering how to increase the academic workload of at least the elected academic staff and increase their involvement in the study process.

Overall, the situation of the College is that the academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is balanced, with 94% of them not working full-time at the College.

However, when assessing possible future scenarios for the college, such as increasing student numbers, developing new study programmes and modes of delivery, it would be valuable to consider ways of increasing the workload of academic staff. In addition, it should be noted that in such a situation, a balanced workload for administrative staff should also be ensured in order to be able to provide quality methodological and administrative support to the involved stakeholders.

1.3.8. The College has a specific target group of students and is highly specialised to provide them with all the necessary support to ensure their studies, rehabilitation and social integration. In this area, SIVA as an educational institution is an absolute exception and is unique in the Latvian higher education system in a positive sense, providing such a wide range of support services to all students, and free of charge - at the expense of the state budget. To quote the SAR (p. 34): "the Agency's specialists provide a multiprofessional (doctor, psychologist, career support expert, social worker, social educator, physiotherapist, social carer, etc.) and mutually integrated approach to the study process to ensure the social integration of students and their full participation in the labour market". This approach was highly praised and highlighted by all stakeholders during the expert visit. The College actively identifies the needs and support required of its students and potential applicants, which is also supported by the applicant assessment process during the admission stage, where each applicant and his/her needs are identified and the most suitable study programmes are recommended.

In addition, the teaching staff also actively seek to tailor the teaching to each individual student, assessing the most appropriate teaching methods during expert visits (later confirmed by both students and alumni). Students also have the possibility to receive an individual study plan tailored to their individual situation, in accordance with the procedures established by the College. On the positive side, the College also collects feedback from students at the end of the study process, asking them to evaluate the quality of the rehabilitation service (support system) they have received.

Overall, the College has identified the necessary support for students, continuously monitors and improves it, taking into account the specific needs of students, and has established a functioning support system, which can be assessed as very good.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study field at the College of the State Agency for Social Integration (SIVA) is well-structured and provides robust support to the students. It is tailored to cater to students with special needs, ensuring their social integration and full participation in the labour market. The financial system, although primarily state-funded, ensures stability but limits the institution's financial autonomy. The infrastructure and resources are generally well-maintained and accessible, though improvements can be made for enhanced accessibility and up-to-date resources. While the procedures for attracting and developing teaching staff are clear and open, there is room for more targeted professional development and increased academic workloads.

Strengths:

- 1.The college provides extensive support services, including a multidisciplinary approach involving doctors, psychologists, career support experts, and social workers, ensuring holistic student development.
- 2.Ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure accessibility demonstrate a commitment to supporting all students.
- 3.The college's finances are stable, with a medium-term budget plan ensuring the smooth running of operations.
- 4.Classrooms and facilities are adapted for students with disabilities, with various technical solutions in place to aid their learning process.
- 5.The recruitment process for teaching staff is open and well-communicated to stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

- 1.The college's financial decisions are heavily regulated by external bodies, limiting its autonomy.
- 2.There is a lack of transparency and communication regarding the allocation and planning of funds for specific study fields and activities.
- 3.The system for funding scientific and research activities is underdeveloped and lacks clear procedures.
- 4.There is no clear, systematic approach to updating the material, informational, and methodological base for the involved stakeholders.
- 5.The Moodle platform is not fully utilized, with monotonous teaching methods and limited interactive solutions.
- 6.There are no guidelines for developing study materials specifically designed for students with disabilities.
- 7.Students' use of digital resources is hampered by low digital literacy and English language skills.
- 8.The library's working hours are limited, reducing accessibility for students and academic staff.
- 9.The academic and administrative workload balance for teaching staff is not well-defined, potentially impacting their engagement and productivity.
- 10.The professional development activities for academic staff lack regularity and targeted focus.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. The College provides some examples of scientific research and projects (e.g. Annex 32) the academic staff of this study field is occupied with. Still, all the mentioned publications are connected with pedagogical and methodological aspects of teaching disabled people or services for disabled people. Nothing field-specific (Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation) since 2019 has been presented. However, the projects dealing with the competencies and services for disabled people are definitely in line with the College's strategy (eg. Vision: The College is a

leading expert in vocational rehabilitation, providing quality vocational education for persons with disabilities and functional impairments and competency-based education for social workers and support persons, Annex 1. SIVA College Strategy 2021-2027, p. 4), then the College lacks research and other scientific initiations and activities integrating the study field and target group (e.g. accessibility of disabled labour to the hotel sector; Hotels' work environment and organization suitability for the disabled employees and customers etc.).

The College has only two field-specific partner organizations from the labour market (SER p. 43) - the Latvian Hotel and Restaurants Association and Hotel Jurmala Spa. Still, applied research is not something in which they are involved with. The College has initiated the brunch with employers as a possibility to talk with the labour market representatives to get valuable feedback for the development of the study programme. Such meetings should be continued and used to question the industry partners and to be involved in developing research directions to ensure those answer the labour market's needs.

During the interview, the managers of the study field mentioned that there are no defined scientific or applied research directions/goals for this study field. Still, the academic staff is working with the general Agency/college level interests - services for disabled people, general competencies and rehabilitation of disabled people, etc. Therefore, one of the significant challenges for the College is finding field-specific and target-group-centric research directions to form the research group(s) and develop the applied research ability. As mentioned during the interviews, since 2023, the College has also received some state money for supporting the research and scientific activities. According to the Appendix 33 - there are cooperation agreements signed with several universities in Latvia (University of Latvia, RISEBA etc), where one of the cooperation aspects is "scientific research activities". Agreements should be implemented, or a plan on how to implement cooperation in science should be developed. More partners from the labour market as well among the higher education institutions need to be attracted; therefore, a specific action plan with targets and expected outcomes should be developed and implemented.

1.4.2. Although the research activities of the academic staff weren't supported by the College till the end of 2023, there are still some publications and projects where applied research activities were shown. Annex 32, The list of scientific publications and participation in conferences of the teaching staff of the "Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and recreation organization" study direction 2017/2024 brings out 19 presentations or publications within seven years, made by six different persons. Only four of those publications are somehow linked with the tourism or hotel industry (Water Resources for Medical Tourism Development in Latvia; Health and Medical Tourism – Common and Distinguish; Factors Influencing Latvian Health Tourism Cluster Stakeholder's Activity; Emissions of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) and Growth the Tourism Industry: Case Study of Latvia), but still hardly connected with the particular "Hotel Service Management" study programme and study field in general. The rest of the publications are mainly about the general competencies of the teacher or broader economic or business issues like social responsibility, entrepreneurship, taxes, etc.

Some of the College's projects, as mentioned in SER (p. 38-39), could be classified as applied research (e.g., the EPR study 'Ensuring rights-based services for people with a disability: EPR members challenges and success stories' in 2023). However, these projects are not aligned with the 'Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and recreation organization' study field and study programme.

Students are encouraged to write their qualification theses on industry-related topics based on empirical research, which can be considered to some extent as applied research. As the college states in SER (p. 37), the qualification theses of the students are based on current issues in the organization where the students have their qualification internship. During the internship, students conduct a practical study to investigate a hotel service management problem and implement improvements, make suggestions, or develop a hotel service management process. The qualification

internship focuses on applied research, where the organization can use the data and research results in practice. Nevertheless, the content of the students' papers cannot be the basis for the studies, although the students' research can refer to some necessary trends or changes.

During the interview the academic staff brought out some examples of how they constantly update the course descriptions and use their research activity results in their teaching activity and integrate it into their studies. In most cases their own research (made mainly in other HEIs) is not connected with the courses they give, but they are working as professionals in the field and use their network to keep up with the trends and latest results and bring those to their lectures. Lecturers also constantly participate in professional courses to update their own knowledge and skills and use those in teaching.

1.4.3. According to the SER (p. 38-39) and conducted interviews during the on-site visit, international cooperation is mainly implemented in four ways - 1) staff participating in conferences and trying to find exciting and potential contacts from abroad to have further collaboration; 2) through the Erasmus+ and other projects network; 3) through the ERP network; and 4) through existing partners abroad (similar institutions).

Unfortunately, all those contacts are just in the first phases and are now more oriented toward building networks and establishing trustworthy relations (on-site interview). The students of this study field have yet to benefit from those, but there are ideas and potential for further and more content-rich collaboration. The interviewed students couldn't bring any examples about the international connections, events, possibilities, etc., concerning their college studies. Interviewed graduates emphasized that they had no information about the mobility possibilities and international events during their study time. Still, they miss this opportunity right now because it would benefit their communication and English skills and better prepare them for the labour market.

The academic staff mentioned in on-site visit, that some international events they have been participated or organized eg. study trip to Portugal to learn critical thinking skills and they came back with some good ideas to be implemented in their College; Latvian food week was organized in Germany and is planned to hold in Portugal).

However, it's crucial to note that none of the aforementioned activities are currently linked to scientific or applied research. There is a pressing need to develop this direction, and the expert team eagerly anticipates the steps to take.

Based on the information provided by the Head of International Relations, the institution has successfully established international contacts with similar institutions abroad, such as Mariaberg (<https://www.mariaberg.de/>) in Germany, Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Estonia, Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (www.arfp.asso.fr) and FAGERH (<https://www.fagerh.fr/formations-qualifiantes> in France, Fønix (<https://fonix.as/privatpersoner/fagopplaering/>) in Norway. These collaborations are not only highly encouraged but also hold immense potential for the growth and development of this study field. The students and staff should feel inspired by the possibilities that these international initiatives can bring, although should such a collaboration enlarge the possibilities for joint research activities.

1.4.4. Although some of the academic staff members do some research work, they do not as employees of this College but as lecturers of other HEIs. The research is based on their interests and/or previous experiences. Therefore, their research areas only somewhat match the courses they give at SIVA. During the interview, the academic staff also mentioned that they hope for direct research themes and possibilities to be involved in the scientific and applied research activities (e.g., projects) proposed from the College side and will be ready to contribute.

The College organizes scientific conferences, and the 14th in a row was held at the end of 2023, titled "Communication and Information Exchange. Human and technologies." The academic staff can participate in the College's scientific conferences and others in Latvia and abroad and prepare

scientific publications, which contribute to professional development. Since then, the motivation of the academic staff in this field of study has been small, and only some lecturers have presented their research or made presentations at the College's conferences (<https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/konferences>).

Since the College got the financial opportunity to develop the scientific and applied research direction just at the end of 2023, they are preparing a more precise and detailed research action plan. The general action plan of the study field (SER, p. 15) indicates just one activity concerning the research activity: Student involvement in scientific or applied research and the College's student scientific conferences but gives no further information about the directions, targets, KPIs or responsible persons.

During the site visit, the academic staff expressed their disappointment at the lack of additional motivational packages at the College to encourage or support them in their research activities. They feel that the College has not effectively communicated the necessity of research work, and most of their commitment has been dedicated to teaching activities. This lack of support has led to a general feeling of low motivation in the field of study.

1.4.5. The college has tried to involve students in research activities in two main ways. The first option for the students is to participate in the college's scientific conference. Based on the information provided in the interview, the students were not informed about such a possibility. Some students (from other specialties) were asked personally by the teachers to present at the conference—the information or opportunity was not meant for all the students. However, some students have participated in the conference as presenters, but not from this field of study.

The second option for the students to develop their research skills with the teacher's support is writing their qualification theses. Although this student paper's idea and process enable the quality level applied research together with the company, this possibility is not widely used. At least not in a systematic way, which should attention that the topic is agreed upon tripartially, the research methodology is academically proven and validated, research is carried out using the representative sample and academic ethics, and research results are analyzed with respected qualitative or quantitative methods, results will be introduced in the company as well at the college to motivate following researches and possible publications.

According to the students' feedback, expressed during the on-site interview, they found some study tasks to be truly engaging. The preparation of these assignments, which required good research skills, was particularly rewarding. For instance, tasks like making the Latvian Hotel market overview and analysis or finding the best ever hotel were not only interesting but also a testament to the students' developing research skills. It's a point of pride that the teachers are successfully encouraging students to use and develop their research skills during their studies.

1.4.6. The main innovation in higher education and this study field lies in the methodology of linking health support and rehabilitation with professional studies. This College is the only HEI in Latvia with the methodology, professional knowledge, and experiences to involve people with or foreseen disabilities in studies and support their access and/or career in the labour market.

Although the College itself mentions in SER (p.41) some other activities (international cooperation, research projects and conferences, developing professional competencies, etc.) as innovation, then those are regular and traditionally necessary activities at any higher education institution to achieve its goals and cannot be considered as innovation. One activity from this list (SER p. 41) can be considered internal innovation (new and innovative initiative for this institution) - brunch with labour market representatives. This is a meeting format with the employers, where students of the College and experts in the field are invited to share their experience in employing persons with disabilities, which promotes the well-being and practical cooperation of both employers and employees.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study field exhibits several strengths, including a strong emphasis on industry-related empirical research for student theses and practical studies during internships, which enhance problem-solving skills in hotel service management. The College has established robust international contacts with similar institutions abroad, supporting a global perspective. Teachers assign projects that develop students' research skills, and the College links health support and rehabilitation with professional studies. However, there are notable weaknesses that need addressing. There is a low level of field-oriented research and a lack of integration of scientific activities within the study field. Employer involvement in applied research is minimal, and there are no defined research directions or goals for the study field. Additionally, the College lacks a precise research action plan and a general action plan for the study field. Student involvement in research activities is low, and none of the international activities are linked to scientific or applied research. Furthermore, there is a lack of motivational packages to encourage academic staff to engage in research activities.

Strengths:

1. Students are encouraged to write their qualification theses on industry-related topics based on empirical research.
2. During the internship, students conduct a practical study to investigate a hotel service management problem and implement improvements, make suggestions, or develop a hotel service management process.
3. The institution has successfully established international contacts with similar institutions abroad
4. The teachers provide study assignments, which support the development of the student's research skills.
5. The College has developed and implements the methodology to link health support and rehabilitation with professional studies

Weaknesses:

1. Low level of field oriented research. The College lacks research and other scientific initiations and activities integrating the study field and target group.
2. Small number of employers are involved in applied research or other scientific activities.
3. There are no defined scientific and applied research directions/goals for this study field.
4. The precise and detailed research action plan is missing as well as the general action plan of the study field.
5. The involvement of the students in research activities is low.
6. None of the international activities are currently linked to scientific or applied research.
7. The lack of motivational packages at the College to encourage or support the academic staff in research activities.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

- 1 R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There are some signs of research activities, but those are not linked with the study field and supported systematically by the College.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1. Based on SAR (p. 43): "Cooperation partners corresponding to the field of study and the study programme are selected according to the field of hospitality and tourism, as well as taking into account the College's target group, which requires an individual approach to both securing internships and integration into the labour market." Nevertheless experts did not find any credible proof of successful integration of graduates in the labour market. None of the graduates invited for the interviews was employed by the tourism or hospitality company, employers experts met were not currently employing graduates of SIVA. Employers' experience regarding students as interns was described as very positive. Geography of employers was wide as described in SAR. In order to succeed in "Cooperation partners are attracted to exchange experience, it is necessary to improve the study programme according to the current affairs of the industry and to improve the professional competence of the teaching staff." (SAR p. 43) more intense cooperation with employers should be considered, for example inviting employers for guest lectures and organizing on-site visits for students and lecturers of SIVA.

Experts did not find the proof of "joint development of academic, research and other projects;" (SAR p. 43). Lecturers invited for the meeting were not involved in research. Even though SIVA has several cooperation agreements with other establishments of higher education (eg. Association of Latvian Colleges) there are not currently ongoing projects in applied research. According to the information, the college management submitted, it is planned to launch separate projects in the near future. Experts were not provided with information of fulfilled or past applied research projects. Experts were informed about SIVA's active participation in employers organizations, member of the board of Latvia Hotel and Restaurant association was present at the meeting and described the area of cooperation.

1.5.2. Based on SAR (p. 44) "Cooperation with various foreign institutions, employers and non-governmental organisations is essential to ensure the achievement of the study programme's objectives and study results. Such cooperation gives students and staff the opportunity to gain international experience, develop their skills and knowledge, and broaden their horizons and professional opportunities." Experts found the proof of ongoing international cooperation and mobility projects, even mobility projects are very recent as graduates invited for the interviews were not aware of Erasmus+ possibilities while they were studying. In experts opinion this area should require further development. SAR (p. 44) states that there are international: "Internship opportunities: Cooperation with employers and organisations provides students with internships and work experience abroad that complement theoretical knowledge with practical skills.", but there were no further evidence of cases of past foreign internships of students, rather participation in shorter mobility projects.

1.5.3. As internationalization is one of the criteria for the accreditation in experts opinion SIVA management should be more active to fulfill criteria and explore the opportunities of Erasmus+ to attract guest lecturers if not students, based on SAR (p. 46): "The Agency College has not recruited any foreign students so far, as its main target group is people with disabilities studying under the Vocational Rehabilitation Service with state budget funds. Foreign lecturers are invited to speak on a voluntary basis, as no additional funding has been allocated to attract foreign lecturers so far." In experts opinion, occasional cooperation with foreign tutors would make students more competitive in the labour market, also SIVA lecturers would benefit from exchange of knowledge in teaching methods and industry trends. English language skills of teachers of SIVA should be improved as the main source of information on industry trends and developments are published mostly in English.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study programme benefits from a strong foundation of cooperation agreements, garnering

positive feedback from employers and members of the board of the Latvia Hotel and Restaurant Association. Additionally, the recent initiation of mobility projects could add value to the programme in the future.

However, the programme faces challenges, whether the collaboration with the industry has been poor, there is no positive impact on students' employability and their smoother integration to the labour market. Nevertheless, to the number of collaboration agreements, there is no evidence about the implementation or results of cooperation activities. Furthermore, there are poor outcomes regarding attracting the foreign lecturers.

Strengths:

1. Good basis of cooperation agreements.
2. Positive feedback from employers and members of the board of Latvia Hotel and Restaurant association.
3. Recently started mobility projects.

Weaknesses:

1. Poor results of integration and employment of graduates.
2. So far, there is no cooperation with foreign universities to attract teaching staff. Consequently, no system and procedures have been established.
3. Despite the fact that the SIVA has concluded several cooperation agreements with higher education institutions of Latvia, it can not be claimed that the provisions stated in the agreements are implemented in any way.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

- 1 R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Although the college has taken steps to reach a new level of collaboration locally and internationally, there is currently only little evidence of success and results that contribute to the quality of the studies.

1.6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures

Analysis

1.6.1. Study field received recommendations on the last accreditation in 2012. There were seven recommendations made. First one was to attract more students (not only with disabilities, but also with good health). From 2022, when the Agency implemented the Latvian Recovery and Stability Mechanism (ANM project), the College is not allowed to implement paid services, and therefore not to enroll paid students, until the end of 2025.

Second one was to improve mobility activities: they started Erasmus+ activities in 2023.

Third one recommended organising English language courses for both academic and administrative staff. There have been changes in staff and leadership since 2012, and the English level of staff in interviews with experts was not perfect. The recommendation remains unsolved.

Forth recommendation was on promotion of creative and research work of students and academic staff together with students and academic staff of similar study programmes in other Latvian colleges: SIVA College students, staff and graduates participate in scientific conferences organised by the Latvian Association of Colleges, where groups of similar programmes are formed. Cooperation

agreements with other higher education institutions have been presented in the Annex No. 33. But there is no sign/evidence that any student from this study field/programme has been involved. Also the teachers stated that none from this field has been participating.

It was recommended to increase the access to scientific databases: from 2019, the college subscribes to the EBSCO database, available to both lecturers and students.

Increasing the number of publications by academic staff was the sixth recommendation: only from November 2023, the Ministry of Education and Science has allocated funding for scientific and research activities, part of which is earmarked for publications by academic staff. So far, the Agency's budget has been relatively small for scientific and research activities. The recommendation is here to stay.

The last recommendation was that students should be given more specific information about job opportunities. SIVA college organizes: career support experts organise career sessions; tea evenings with a career counsellor; an annual event "Brunch for Employers" – to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities; career support plan is included in the college's work plan; during their internships, students get information about job opportunities; students can access the platform www.nakotnesprakse.lv to find information about internships and jobs.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

There should remain two of previous seven recommendations, which were not fulfilled entirely: organising English language courses for staff and increasing the number of publications by academic staff. Mobility activities could also be improved in the future.

Strengths:

1.SIVA has started Erasmus+ activities in 2023. With Erasmus +, the College will certainly expand its international cooperation.

Weaknesses:

1. English language skills for academic personnel can not be assessed as sufficient. This prevents teachers from developing their professionalism and participation in national and international research.
2. There are still a very limited number of publications since previous accreditation was done. Only 19 publications within six years can not be considered as sufficient.
3. Promotion of creative and research work of students and academic staff together with students and academic staff of similar study programmes in other Latvian colleges should be improved.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

- 1 R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

English language skills for academic personnel can not be assessed as sufficient. There are still a very limited number of publications since previous accreditation was done. Promotion of creative and research work of students and academic staff together with students and academic staff of similar study programmes in other Latvian colleges should be improved.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1. Clarify and align objectives: Revise the study field objectives to be more specific and aligned with the overarching goals of the College, ensuring they are reviewed and approved by the College Board within the next academic year.
2. Develop a concrete study field development plan: Create a detailed development plan for the study field incorporating SWOT analysis findings, with clear responsibilities and deadlines.
3. Assign responsibility for study field development: Designate specific personnel responsible for the continuous development of the study field, documenting their roles and responsibilities.
4. Standardize Student Performance Assessment: Develop a standardized and transparent student performance assessment policy that excludes attendance as a criterion before the start of the next academic year to be in accordance with the learning outcome based assessment principles.
5. Improve website content management: Gain control over website content to ensure transparent presentation of quality policy and study field content, making information accessible to all stakeholders.
6. Define applied research directions: Establish clear applied research directions and goals for the study field and publish them for faculty and student awareness.
7. Create a research action plan: Develop a precise and detailed research action plan for the study field within six months and implement it with regular monitoring.
8. Engage employers in research activities: Develop partnerships with employers to involve them in applied research and scientific activities, increasing the number of employers participating in research and other projects and study activities.
9. Increase student involvement in research: Introduce initiatives to actively involve students in research activities, thereby increasing student participation in research projects and events.
10. Implement motivational packages for staff: Develop and implement motivational packages to encourage academic staff to engage in research, increasing staff research activities and publications.
11. Enhance English language skills for academic staff: Provide professional development opportunities to improve English language proficiency among academic staff, reviewed annually to ensure progress.
12. Develop cooperation with foreign universities to attract teaching staff by establishing a clear system and procedures for implementation of international collaboration/agreements.
13. Establish clear and transparent procedures for financial planning and allocation, and communicate these procedures to all stakeholders.
14. Provide training for academic staff on utilizing Moodle's full range of features, including interactive tools like H5P technologies.
15. Introduce incentives for lecturers to create and upload comprehensive and engaging learning materials to the Moodle platform.
16. Create and implement guidelines for developing study materials tailored to the needs of students with disabilities.
17. Launch activities to improve students' digital literacy and English language skills, enabling better use of digital resources.

18.Consider assessing and adjusting library working hours to better meet the needs of students and academic staff.

19.Review and update the methodology documentation. The College should review and update its current procedures and methodologies to ensure that course descriptions incorporate assessment principles that objectively confirm students' knowledge and professional skills through a variety of meaningful testing methods

20.Establish a plan to activate targeted research activity within the framework of the college funding (state budget) and find opportunities to attract external funding (for ex., EU funds). The plan should also include a teacher motivation system.

Long-term recommendations

1.Develop AI use policy in study process: Establish a comprehensive policy on the use of AI tools in the study process and publish it for integration in coursework and assessments.

2.Integrate learning management systems: Consolidate data from various learning management systems into a unified platform for comprehensive data accessibility and analysis.

3.Increase field-oriented research: Enhance research activities by setting specific research goals and initiating projects that integrate the study field and target group, increasing field-oriented research projects and publications.

4.Link international activities to research: Connect international projects and other activities with scientific and applied research to enhance global collaboration.

5.Increase number of publications: Encourage and support academic staff to publish more scientific papers in the field of study, setting continuous annual targets for publication increases

6.Improve graduate employment in industry: Develop strategies to enhance the integration and employment of graduates in the Hotel and Restaurant Management industry, aiming for higher employment rates in the relevant industry.

7.Advocate for more financial autonomy to make independent decisions regarding the allocation of funds.

8.Explore alternative funding sources, such as partnerships with private sector entities, grants, and alumni donations, to reduce dependency on state funding.

9.Develop a comprehensive plan for funding scientific and research activities, including clear application procedures and evaluation criteria. Invest in building a robust research infrastructure and culture, with clearly defined funding mechanisms and support for academic staff.

10.Develop a systematic approach for the regular updating of material, informational, and methodological resources, ensuring transparency and stakeholder involvement.

11.Implement a more structured and regular professional development programme focusing on innovative teaching methods and student-centered learning.

12.Consider strategies to increase the academic workload for teaching staff, promoting more engagement and development of teaching materials

13.Continue improving the accessibility of infrastructure for students with different types of disabilities

14. Evaluate possibilities to open another study programme within the study field, especially taking into account the very high demand in the sector for the labour force.

II - "Hotel Services Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Hotel Services Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The title of the study programme is "Hotel Service Management", and the study field is "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation". Based on the titles the study programme is in line with the study field.

The study programme "Hotel Service Management" (41811) is well-suited to be categorized under the broader study field of "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism, and Recreation Organization". By addressing key themes and objectives of the broader field, the programme prepares students for career opportunities within the dynamic and multifaceted hotel services.

2.1.2. The programme's title focuses on management (Hotel Service Management, code 41811), but the given qualification is more oriented to the organization/administration (Hotel Service Organiser.) In addition to this, section 2.5 of this report points out the inaccuracies in the model Diploma Supplement, where the College also indicates Hotel Services Management as the main field of study. The expert panel here sees a significant difference because the management position expects other and additional skills and knowledge, which should be included in the study programme. The professional standard that the College follows is also meant for organizers, not managers. The same discrepancy is reflected in the aim of the study programme: To prepare qualified, highly motivated hotel service managers who understand the principles and rules of hospitality are able to apply theoretical knowledge, skills and competences in practice to ensure efficient and sustainable operation of the company, but as the College mentions in the SER (p. 60) that graduates can work as waiters, kitchen staff, sales and marketing specialists and hotel managers - mainly specialist level.

During the on-site interviews, the graduates expressed their expectations for higher roles after graduation, such as middle management positions in the hotel industry. They felt that the programme did not adequately prepare them for these roles, as it focused more on specialist level competencies rather than management courses. The learning outcomes of the programme also better refer to the organizer-level activities (e.g., the ability to handle and organize individual and group orders, the systematic collection and processing of customer feedback on hotel services, the ability to assess the demand for hotel services according to the criteria set by the company's management, etc.) and do not show management level competences (especially not top manager competences).

All the courses are provided in Latvian, and although the English language courses are included in the study programme, the students' English skills could be improved. This must be supported, especially considering the study field, sector needs, and requirements. Therefore, international collaboration should be strengthened to offer additional possibilities (e.g., guest lecturers from abroad, participation in international projects, joint activities together with international students, etc.) for the students to communicate in English and practice their language skills.

During the interviews, the teachers, students and graduates also mentioned that there are not enough contact hours in part-time studies to achieve the intended learning outcomes. It is connected with the low English language level of the students (too few hours to practice). However,

it will also lead to the need for more meaningful use of independent working hours as well as, in some cases, the need to choose a more suitable methodology for part-time studies.

The admission requirements are reasonable, saying that "persons with disabilities, foreseeable disabilities and functional impairments with secondary education who have received a vocational suitability assessment service and a recommendation to study in the relevant study programme of the qualification level 5 and have submitted the necessary documents may study full-time and part-time at state budget funds". Those requirements are general and the same for all the student candidates to this College and, therefore, do not include any field or programme-specific requirements. Moreover, as it was stated during the interview with the management and administrative staff of this study field, every student candidate would be carefully considered (based on his/her wishes, expectations but also disability level and previous experiences and abilities) for a particular study programme, suitable directly to him or her. This approach to admission is student-centric and supportive, but high drop-out levels and tiny admission numbers also show a possible need for improvements in this system.

2.1.3. Since the last accreditation was in 2012, some of the recommendations made by the expert panel at this time might not be relevant any more, but this does not justify the fact that the College started to make improvements (based on the 2012 year report) only three years ago or at the end of the last year when finances for the scientific activity made available.

Since the previous assessment, two significant changes have been made in this study programme.

1) changes in the content concerning the launch of a new professional standard for Hotel Service Organizer, 2) changes in the credit points system from a national credit points system to the European Credit Transfer system (ETCS).

Based on the launch of the professional standard, the study programme was updated - the study programme was organized in formal modular structure (one semester = one module), the Elective courses were added to the study programme, some new courses were added (e.g. Sociology Basics), some smaller courses were merged into one to avoid too short courses (e.g. Work Organisation in Tourism and Hospitality), and the scope of some courses has been changed, e.g. Professional English (increased from 4.5 CP to 6 CP). Although some changes were formal (e.g., changing the programme's structure to modular), the programme's formal structure aligns with the professional standard, but there are some problems in matching the requirement of professional standard with the study programme content. Those discrepancies are given in section 2.2.1.

While the transformation from the national credit points system to the European credit transfer system is still underway, the College is prepared to fully implement the ECTS requirements by September, 2024, as stated during the assessment visit.

2.1.4. Although the College mentions in the SAR that they regularly analyze the labour market, the given analyses did not reflect that. As was stated in the SAR (p. 60) and some people mentioned in interviews that the Covid time was hard for the hospitality sector (many businesses closed down or fired employees), and this reflected in students number as well - people did not want to start learning something with the low potential in the labour market perspective. The sector is recovering, and the number of applicants and admitted students should start to increase, but in 2023, no students were admitted. Nevertheless, the number of students is still minimal (in total, 11 students in 2023/24). Although this may be useful to support the individual approach to each student, this also hurts lecturers' motivation (one do not know whether will have a job/courses for the next semester or not), finances (fewer students mean less money for the study field and the indirect costs, as well for the development of the study programme) and the study programme prospects in general (fading programme loses attraction and interests from the management side). The statistics of student movements (Annex 36) show the constant problem with the admission and drop-out levels (high drop-out is explained by the College by the health and motivational issues of the

students).

As stated in SAR (p. 69), between 2018 and 2023, 19 students graduated from the programme, of whom 10, or 52.6%, are currently in employment relations, and the statistics show that graduates are successfully gaining employment in the sector. However, all the interviewed employers' representatives also confirmed the constant and high need for educated labour. Although the target group of the College and this study are the persons with a disability, foreseeable disability or impairment of functioning, then the College should find more possibilities/measures to adjust the studies and support mechanisms (e.g. direct and constant work with the employers) to ensure the graduates' readiness to work for the industry in studied specialization. One possible problem in graduates' small field-specific employment might be a discrepancy between given promises (they become managers), and labour market expectations (need for specialist-level employees), and graduates are not ready to work as specialists (two graduates explained this issue during the on-site interview).

2.1.5. Not applicable.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study programme boasts a student-supportive admission system tailored to the needs of its main target group, disabled individuals, through individualized rehabilitation plans. However, there are several critical areas that need improvement. There is a noticeable discrepancy between the programme's title, the expectations of students and graduates, and the professional standard. While the individual rehabilitation plans focus primarily on health issues, they lack emphasis on identifying the best methods and methodologies for students to succeed academically in this field. Furthermore, there is an absence of thorough labour market analysis specific to this target group, which is essential for aligning the programme with market needs. The programme also faces challenges with a small number of admissions and a high dropout rate, which threaten its sustainability and effectiveness.

Strengths:

1. Student-supportive admission system with the individual rehabilitation plan that is necessary for the main target group (disabled people).

Weaknesses:

1. Discrepancy between the title of the study programme, students/graduates expectations and professional standard.
2. Individual plan is focused on health - issues, not so much on studies (eg. which are the best methods and methodology for the student to study in this field).
3. Proper labour market analysis concerning this particular target group is missing.
4. Small number of the admission and students number in total.
5. High level of drop-out students.
6. The intended learning outcomes are not always achievable with the amount of provided contact hours (eg. in English course).

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The total amount of the study programme is 120 KP (according to the regulation can be 120-180 KP) and the duration of the study programme is 2 years (full time studies) or 2 years and 5 months (part time absence studies). It should be noted that not all documents or annexes show the

same duration for part-time studies (for example, diploma supplement and annex no. 42, show 2,5 years of study duration). However, it can be considered that mentioning 2.5 years instead of 2 years and 5 months is a technical problem. The composition of the study programme conforms to requirements stated in the standard.

External stakeholders confirmed that the study programme and acquired competences of students correspond to the needs of the industry and labour market. College has provided the comparison with the professional standard hotel service organizer and all the competences (skills, knowledge and competences) are justified with the particular course(s) in annex 37 (Compliance with the professional standard). Nevertheless there are two major problems concerning this comparison:

1. Although the standard gives certain nice and correctly worded (with the verb) learning outcomes (skills, knowledge and competences), then those are not used in most of the course descriptions, where in some cases just abilities (competences) are mentioned, in some just knowledge are listed, but not in line with the intended learning outcomes expected in the professional standard.

2. The aforementioned annex gives the linkage between standard (concrete skills, knowledge and competence) and study course, but those linkages do not reflect in the source descriptions. Eg, Quality management should teach (based on the annex 37) service quality (process, monitoring, assessment etc), but Quality Management course description shows just general QM principles and no service management aspects are mentioned at all. Another example, the development of students' skills in using Customer Relation Management - CRM tools at the use level should be done in the courses "Applied informatics" and "Law studies", but the descriptions of these courses do not include information about such technologies or their use. The College has also not purchased special licences for the use of such tools in the study process. During the visit it was mentioned that students learn these tools during excursions in hotels, but it is not possible to develop the skills to use these tools at the usage level only during the excursion.

Similar discrepancies are also observed in relation to other skills, knowledge and competences included in the standard and it is therefore important that the College carefully assesses and aligns the curriculum content with the relevant professional standard. Hence, in order to be able to carry out a full conformity assessment - the SIVA needs to improve the above mentioned annex and study course descriptions of the relevant courses.

In the interviews several members of the staff mentioned that the students are interested in the programme, because they would like to open their own business in this field. Unfortunately the study programme does not offer the competences necessary to start their own business. The study programme conforms to the professional standard "Hotel Service Organizer", the purpose of which is not business management and therefore the study programme only very partially covers aspects needed for the competence of business management. There is some mismatch between the title of the study programme, which suggests management, and the expectations of students and graduates who aspire to become managers or entrepreneurs, compared to the professional standard, which focuses more on organization and administration.

In general, the study programme fulfills most of the requirements set by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818>), which are also indicated in the annex - Compliance of the Study Programme with the State Education Standard (Annex 42) submitted by SIVA.

Finally, the procedures and methodologies developed by the College to regulate the organisation of students' internships should be clarified so that they are in line with point 15 of the Standard for Vocational Higher Education and the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No 481 of 29 August 2023 on the 'Procedure for organising internships in professional education programmes' (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/344976>).

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Lecturers are using diverse teaching methods: lectures, discussion and learning negotiation, applied games and simulation, situational analysis, projects. While other methods are being used for the independent work of students: studying and analyzing theoretical sources, academic work (reports, essays, coursework, etc.), presentation preparation.

In the interviews, the students expressed their satisfaction with the modern approaches and case studies that are discussed during the lectures, as well as with the lecturers' knowledge of the fields. One student mentioned that they were wondering why they have so many presentations within one of the courses, until they understood that it helps them to gain more self-confidence and improve their social skills. It could be confirmed that the student-centered learning and teaching principles are considered.

The individual approach (together with rehabilitation plan) to each student is very good, but teachers still need more methodological support on how to adjust the study methods with the particular student/study group.

The overall evaluation of the study programme's methods and assessment system is that they are flexible, coherent, and well-integrated. This promotes students' motivation and ensures high-quality learning of the programme content.

2.2.4. A career support expert is responsible for informing students about the internship period, assisting them in finding the most suitable internship, signing internship contracts with the host company, and maintaining links with the employer during the internship. The internship supervisor at the College, who is a lecturer in the study programme, ensures the implementation of the internship programme and oversees the content of the internship report in accordance with the study programme and methodological regulations. The duration and timing of the internship are defined in the study plan and are linked to the semester study timetable of each study group.

The tasks of the internship are outlined in the internship programmes of the study programme (Annexes No. 39 and No. 40), which are approved by the College's Research and Methodological Council. Internships are divided into two parts: a training internship (9 CP) and a qualification internship (15 CP). Training and qualification internships are organized on different topics, including the characteristics of the enterprise or organization, its structure, occupational health and safety, quality of service, customer service, and process assessment.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. In the last four years the qualification theses on the following themes were defended: 1) Analysis of the employee motivation system of LLC Liepāja Region Tourism Information Bureau. 2) Improvement of marketing activities in the hospitality company "Eglaine". 3) Opportunities for service development at "Semarah Hotel Metropole" in a pandemic 4) Customer satisfaction analysis and key factors in shaping guest opinions at "Bellevue Park Hotel Riga". 5) The impact of Covid-19 on the tourism product. 6) Opportunity analysis of the social enterprise "Upeslīči atpūtai". 7) Evaluation and market promotion of the hospitality product of the hotel "Zemgale". 8) Product research and development opportunities for the recreation centre "Meža apartamenti".

Selected topics are related to current industry developments, current and at the same time specific to students' interests.

The 'Procedure for the elaboration and defence of the qualification paper' approved by the College does not fully regulate the process and composition of the State Examination Committee and does not stipulate that the chairperson of the Committee shall be representatives of professional organisations or employers in the field, thus creating a risk of non-compliance with Paragraph 64 of the Standard for Professional Higher Education. In addition, the College should revise these procedures to include how the board is constituted and the roles of its members, including a clarification that the board is composed of teachers of professional specialisation courses (rather

than specialised courses, without defining what these specialised courses are).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Learning outcomes elaborated in the standard are not used in most of the course descriptions, where in some cases just abilities (competences) are mentioned, in some just knowledge are listed, but not in line with the intended learning outcomes expected in the professional standard. In the interviews staff mentioned that the students are interested in the programme, because they would like to open their own business in this field. Unfortunately the study programme does not offer the competences necessary to start their own business. The overall evaluation of the study programme's methods is that they are flexible, coherent, and well-integrated. This promotes students' motivation and ensures high-quality learning of the programme content. Teachers still need more methodological support on how to adjust the study methods with the particular student/study group. Selected topics of students' final theses are related to current industry developments, current and at the same time specific to students' interests.

Strengths:

1. The study programme's methods and assessment system are flexible, coherent, and well-integrated.

Weaknesses:

1. Learning outcomes of the study programme are not in line with the intended learning outcomes expected in the professional standard.
2. Teachers don't have enough methodological support on how to adjust the study methods with the particular student/study group.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

- 1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. Based on SAR (p. 66-67): For the study direction "Hotel and restaurant services, tourism and recreation" study programme "Hotel Service Management" implementation - 270 books are available in the library, and new books are purchased every year. The library's book resources are renewed based on the faculty's demand for the latest literature within the available funding for the study course." In experts opinion library resources of the books should be improved, faculty's demand on purchasing the newest literature both in Latvian and in English should be further encouraged. Experts did not find a plan of funding for scientific provision.

There is only the EBSCO database available in the library. No other specific database available in the library and, therefore, is not promoted for students. Experts would recommend developing a list of data based, available for free of charge or paid, and recommend students to use information from these databases in the majority of study courses.

In experts opinion it would be beneficial to incorporate technologies in the study programme.

Together with the better collaboration with the industry representatives (social partners), the College could implement the possibilities to enable students to learn about the most needed and popular speciality connected software in partner companies (seminars in companies, internship tasks, study visits to companies, quest lecturers from companies to introduce software and allow temporary access, job shadowing etc).

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. Based on SAR (p. 67): Given that the College is a unit of a public institution, the College's budget is part of the Agency's budget and consists of 99.5% state budget subsidy and 0.5% tuition fee income. The College plans to spend 59.9% on remuneration, 37.8% on goods and services, 1.6% on capital expenditure and 0.7% on social benefits — grants for sign language interpreters, Student Honour grants. Only on the basis of the information provided by SAR, which, moreover, is for the entire college, experts cannot assess whether such allocation of available financial resources is adequate. Experts point out that the development of the study field requires funding not only to cover operational costs, but also longer-term investments, for example, for the purchase of industry-specific software, the purchase of a more modern antiplagiarism system, etc.

Experts already have mentioned the tremendous decrease in the number of students in this programme in other chapters of this report. The main source for the marketing of the programme is through the experts of the State Employment agency of Latvia. Experts did not notice any additional motivation and real plan of the management team of SIVA to increase the number of students in the near future. Working on the quality of education in this programme and providing competitive skills and knowledge and integration of the graduates of SIVA in the labour market would be one area the management team should consider. Even SAR (p. 67) states that there is possibility to attract paying students: "Tuition fees for study programmes are set in accordance with the current Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1002 of 24 September 2013 "Price List of Paid Services of the Social Integration State Agency"., there are no cases of actual paying students currently. Improving the quality of education, competitiveness of graduates most probably would help to develop this area. For that, experts would recommend finding out possibilities to increase the number of students, for example, to intensifying Erasmus mobility possibilities for students, developing joint study programmes etc. Especially since both current students and alumni (some) noted that they would like to study together with non-disabled students.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The programme benefits from stable state funding, which provides a solid financial foundation. However, it faces challenges in maintaining competitiveness without this state support. There is also a lack of a clear plan and motivation for attracting additional funding, and no plan on how to allocate financial resources for scientific activities.

Strengths:

1. Stable State funding of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Competitiveness of the programme without State funding.
2. Lack of plan and motivation for attraction of extra funding.
3. No funding for scientific provision.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

- 1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The College has established a supportive environment for the students to get information and commit to the studies. Nevertheless some problems (eg. poor level of study materials, too centralised and not transparent budgeting, no plans for allocating research money, missing systematic submission and renewal of materials etc) do not enable students to use the full potential of the created environment.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. According to the self-assessment report and observations during the on-site visit, it can be concluded that the qualification of the teaching staff employed in the study programme corresponds to the SIVA strategic goals and with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments.

Fourteen members of the teaching staff are engaged in the implementation of the study programme. Seven of them are elected lecturers of the SIVA. Three lecturers (21%) engaged in the implementation of the programme hold a Doctoral degree (two of them are elected).

According to the information stated in CV's, for 7 lecturers (out of 14) the English language level proficiency is lower than B2. This does not directly affect the quality of the study programme, because the programme is implemented only in Latvian, however, in the long term it may refer to the quality of lecturers, because it creates limited possibilities to develop their qualification, participate in international projects and mobility.

It can be argued that the teaching staff engaged in the implementation of the study programme conforms to the requirements laid down in the respective laws and regulations.

2.4.2. The teaching staff of the College is quite stable, with little turnover. According to the SAR (p.72), staff rotation varies by up to 10% within one academic year, which is considered to be a minor change. During the interviews with the College teacher staff members, experts gained confidence that all lecturers (except one lecturer) work at the college for more than three years.

The SAR (p.72) states that "Each year the College reviews its teaching staff and recruits new staff to develop the study programme with the engagement of new, qualified specialists". However, perhaps due to the fact that only one programme is being implemented in the study field and, overall, a small number of teachers is employed in it, the principles and criteria for the renewal of the teaching staff have not been sufficiently developed.

The College is doing very well hiring practitioners, who can give both theoretical aspects and insights of the industry as well. The fact that study courses are delivered by practitioners was highly appreciated by students and alumni. However, experts say the college should help industry practitioners more with the methodology for implementing study courses, thus achieving even better results.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. There are seven elected SIVA lecturers, five out of whom have published at least one scientific publication over the past six academic years (Appendix 32). Two of them have published only one publication since 2018. Insufficient scientific activity can have a significant impact on the quality of studies and cannot be considered adequate enough. The College itself is aware of this (listed as a

weak side in the SWOT matrix) and has launched an action to encourage lecturers to engage in scientific activity. Funding has been made available for lecturers to publish scientific works since 2023, according to college management interviews. However, experts were not convinced that in addition to the funding obtained, a plan and motivation system for activating the scientific activity of lecturers had been developed. Moreover, lecturers themselves were not informed that more active research activity was desirable and were not sufficiently aware of the system in place for obtaining support for publishing research results. It would be highly recommended to develop a plan and a system for the development of scientific work in the College.

There are seven members of the academic staff (two are elected) who have practical experience in their industries. Three of them have been in the tourism and hospitality industry already many years. It means that they can give students insight into the industry in addition to theory.

2.4.5. In its self-assessment report (p.73), the SIVA has stated that “the teaching staff coordinates the topics included in the content of each study course to avoid duplication and to ensure that what is learned in one study course can be successfully applied to the content of another study course” (point 3.4.5.). However, neither in the SAR nor during the interviews with the teaching staff, experts could get proof of the existence of institutionalized or organized coordination and cooperation mechanisms. Academic staff meetings are identified as the only cooperation mechanism (SAR point 3.4.5.), but there is no assurance (minutes of the meeting) that the content of study courses is discussed and coordinated at the meetings.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

Only one study programme is being implemented in this study field, at the moment of accreditation, engaging 11 students and 14 members of the academic staff. Undoubtedly, the low number of students has a significant impact on the attraction of the teaching staff and employment opportunities. Despite this, it is highly welcome that 3 lecturers have been active professionals in the tourism industry for many years. According to the information stated in CV's, for 7 lecturers (out of 14) the English language level proficiency is lower than B2. Since the study programme is implemented only in Latvian, it is not a decisive issue, however, in developing the study field, the College should think about attracting lecturers who can also understand information in English much more intricately and thus be themselves, but with a more global view of the development of the industry.

In total, the lecturers of the study field have published 19 articles in the scientific journals or conference proceedings over the past six years. In addition, only 4 publications are related to tourism. None of the publications is directly related to hospitality or hotel management (directly related to study programme implemented in the College). In order to improve the situation, the college urgently needs to develop a scientific development action plan, which would include both possibilities for attracting funding and motivation aspects to promote the research of lecturers.

Strengths:

1. Qualification of the teaching staff employed in the study programme corresponds with the SIVA strategic goals.
2. Engagement of industry practitioners in the implementation of the study programme, which ensures inclusion of industry highlights in study courses.

Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient applied research activities of the academic staff members of the College.
2. No system and motivation mechanisms developed for encouraging the academic staff to perform scientific work.

3. No coordinating and cooperating mechanisms established in the study programme, which would ensure the achievement of the aims of the study programme.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

- 1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a good composition of lecturers, implementing study programme. The academic staff and visiting lecturers have practical experience in the study field, which support the implementation of this short-cycle programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

- 1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme generally complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education," as noted in Annex 42 submitted by SIVA. However, the "Procedure for Testing and Assessment of Students' Knowledge" and course descriptions indicate that the current assessment procedure is incomplete. The reliance on attendance as a criterion for final assessment and the use of "Pass"/"Fail" marking for many courses, where "Pass" can be achieved with just 40% of the exam criteria, risk non-compliance with the Standard's principles of assessment. The College needs to revise its procedures to ensure assessments objectively confirm students' knowledge and skills through diverse and meaningful methods.

Additionally, the "Procedure for the elaboration and defence of the qualification paper" does not fully regulate the State Examination Committee's process and composition, lacking stipulations for professional representatives as chairpersons, which risks non-compliance with Paragraph 64 of the Standard. The College should update these procedures to define the board's composition and roles clearly.

Lastly, the College's procedures for organising internships must be clarified to align with point 15 of the Standard and the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No 481 of 29 August 2023. Updated procedures should detail the internship placement process, contract information, responsibilities of all parties, and provide guidelines and templates for required documents.

- 2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The College has provided a comparison with the national professional standard for hotel service organizers, detailing how competencies (skills, knowledge, and competences) are addressed in the curriculum, as shown in Annex 37. However, two major issues are identified:

The course descriptions often do not align with the well-defined learning outcomes stated in the professional standard. In many cases, course descriptions list abilities or knowledge separately without integrating them into the intended learning outcomes.

There is a disconnect between the competencies linked to specific courses in Annex 37 and what is reflected in the course descriptions. For example, the Quality Management course should cover service quality aspects but only mentions general quality management principles.

Similarly, courses like "Applied Informatics" and "Law Studies" are supposed to teach CRM tool usage, but this is not reflected in their descriptions, nor has the College purchased the necessary licenses for these tools. During visits, it was stated that students learn about these tools during hotel excursions, which is insufficient for developing usage-level skills.

To ensure full conformity with the professional standard, the College needs to reassess and align the curriculum content and course descriptions with the relevant professional standards.

- 3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Descriptions of almost all study courses in Latvian and English are available in the SAR Annex "Descriptions of the study courses". However, it would be advisable to create separate course descriptions also for the study courses "Learning internship", "Qualification internship" and "Qualification thesis" according to the course description template. The assessment of the compliance of study courses with the requirements set forth in Section 56`1 , Paragraph two and Section 56`2 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions shows that all provided course descriptions meet the formal requirements. However, SIVA can improve the course descriptions by defining course outcomes more clearly, ensuring that they are meaningfully linked to course content and students' independent work tasks, assessing whether these tasks and teaching methods contribute to the achievement of specific learning outcomes, and linking course learning outcomes to study programme learning outcomes in more explicit detail (Annex "Mapping of study courses/modules to achieve study programme learning outcomes"). The course descriptions define the learning outcomes of the courses, but do not clearly define which learning outcomes contribute to which study programme learning outcomes. A more detailed approach and mapping would also make it easier to ensure that the requirements of the professional standard are indeed linked to the content of the study programme. The course literature lists need to be reviewed in order to assess the need to ensure that they are up-to-date with the latest literature and sources in the field.

- 4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Annex SAR "Sample of the diploma and its supplement to be issued for completing the study programme" contains a sample of the diploma and the diploma supplement, which generally meets the requirements set by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 202 of 16 April 2013 "Procedures for Issuing State Recognised Documents of Higher Education"

(<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157>). However, they need to clarify a few minor details:

- 1) Both the Diploma and the Diploma Supplement should clarify the qualification to be obtained from "viesnīcu pakalpojuma organizators" to "viesnīcu pakalpojumu organizators".
- 2) Given that the study programme is not primarily oriented towards hotel service management, but towards hotel service organiser, it is recommended that the main field(s) of study for the

qualification in point 2.2 of the Diploma Supplement (English and Latvian versions) should be clarified to 'hotel service organisation'.

3) The English version of the Diploma Supplement should include the correct title of the qualification to be obtained - 'Hotel service organiser' instead of 'Hotel service manager', the correct translation of the options for continuing studies - Right to continue studies in bachelor or first cycle professional higher education programmes.

4) As the study programme is also implemented as a full-time study programme, a sample of the Diploma Supplement for this form of study should also be established.

- 5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All teaching staff members have Latvian as their mother tongue or C1 level (or above) (Annex 30 (Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the field of study), Biographies of the teaching staff (CV)).

- 9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All teaching staff who conduct their courses in foreign languages (English, German or Russian) have a level of proficiency of C1 level (or higher). (Annex 30 (Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the field of study), Biographies of the teaching staff (CV)).

- 10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The sample study agreement attached to the SAR as Annex "Standard sample of study

agreement" complies with the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No 70 of 23 January 2007 on "Provisions to be included in the study agreement" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072>). However, it should be noted that the attached sample study agreement is only for studies financed from the state budget. No sample study agreement has been provided for studies in a fee-based study place. Even though the College indicates that it does not currently accept fee-paying students, this may change in the future and the College's Price List for Fee-based Services provides this possibility, therefore such a sample agreement should also be provided.

- 11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

SIVA has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another higher education institution if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. The agreements are specified in the annex 20 Confirmation of continuing studies.docx .

However, it should be noted that the attached cooperation agreement foresees that students will be able to continue their studies in the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in Restaurant Business" of the ISMA University College, which grants a different type of professional qualification than SIVA - "Catering Service Organiser", although it falls under the same study field and thematic group of educational programmes. This study programme is currently not yet accredited for the next period, so SIVA is advised to follow up and update this cooperation agreement if necessary in the future.

The attached cooperation agreement with Riga Management College includes two study programmes where students could theoretically continue their studies, however, a check of the data in the State Education Information System shows that these study programmes are currently closed and therefore it is not possible to transfer students.

- 12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SIVA has attached a confirmation in Annex 21 Affidavit of Compensation.docx that SIVA guarantees to refund unused tuition fees to fee-paying students if the study programme is not accredited and the study programme licence is withdrawn due to the College's action (act or omission) and the student does not wish to continue his/her studies in another study programme.

- 13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Non-compliant

Article 6 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967#p6>) stipulates

that students have the right to "draw up and study an individual free elective part of their studies", however, the study programme plan submitted by the college (Annex - 38 Study programme.docx) does not stipulate that within the study programme students could freely choose free elective courses, for example, from other study programmes of the college or other Latvian higher education institutions. The College should clarify the study programme plan to include the free elective part.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

- 1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme generally meets most requirements set by forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments. However, several areas of non-compliance and weaknesses were identified. The current study result assessment procedures are incomplete and do not align with key principles, such as aggregation of positive achievements. Using attendance as a criterion for final assessment risks non-compliance, and the low threshold for "Pass"/"Fail" grades does not objectively measure students' knowledge. The procedures for the elaboration and defence of the qualification paper do not fully comply with standards, particularly regarding the composition and roles of the National Examination Committee. The internship procedures lack clarity and alignment with relevant standards and regulations, necessitating updates. Course descriptions show discrepancies between the intended learning outcomes in the professional standard and those described. Additionally, these descriptions do not sufficiently link learning outcomes to the programme's outcomes and independent work tasks. Minor details in both Latvian and English versions of the diploma and diploma supplement need clarification. Separate course descriptions for "Learning internship", "Qualification intership", and "Qualification thesis" should also be created. A sample study agreement for fee-based study places is missing. Agreements with other institutions for students to continue their education need updating to ensure current accreditation and active study programmes. The study programme plan lacks an option for students to choose free elective courses, as required by the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

The study programme "Hotel Services Management" demonstrates several strengths, particularly in its student-supportive system, which includes individual rehabilitation plans tailored to the needs of disabled students. No doubt, that this programme and specialization fits for the target group, study field and the College's principles. Additionally, the content of the studies meets professional standard, ensuring that the education provided is relevant and applicable. Another strength is the qualification of the teaching staff, which aligns with SIVA's strategic goals, and the engagement of industry practitioners in delivering the programme, which brings industry insights nearer to the students.

However, there are some problems that need addressing. There is a notable discrepancy between the title of the study programme, which suggests management, and the expectations of students and graduates who aspire to become managers or entrepreneurs, compared to the professional standard, which focuses more on organization and administration. There is also a lack of thorough labour market analysis specific to the target group, with only limited initiatives to collaborate with employers. This gap hinders the alignment of the programme with industry needs. Another critical issue is the inability to attract full-time students, with only part-time studies currently available and

no admissions either for part- or full-time studies in 2023. The high dropout rate is alarming, with more students dropping out than being admitted in the past three academic years.

While there is stable State funding for the programme, the College struggles to attract paying students and, due to an EU project until 2025, cannot admit students who pay tuition fees themselves. Furthermore, there is a lack of ideas, plans, and motivation to attract additional funding for further development of the study programme and study environment, such as improving the library, methodology, and software, motivating academic staff, and offering supportive extracurricular activities.

The academic staff's scientific activities are insufficiently supportive of the study programme, and there is no system or motivation mechanism to encourage scientific work although the expert can see some initiations in this direction and hope that the significant steps will be done to improve the situation.

SIVA has a unique role in the Latvian education market, and no other institutions offer similar possibilities for disabled people as important party in the labour market. Due to the different obstacles concerning ownership, structure and management, funding schemes, and untraditional business model (individual approach), etc., the school needs help to achieve quality studies appropriate for higher education. Experts jointly wrote a detailed report to give the College feedback on what should be done to provide quality higher education, but this feedback must be taken as recommendations and formative feedback, not as a summative assessment. In general, the SIVA's existence in the education system is more important than existing problems, which can be removed if there is motivation and commitment from the SIVA side.

Experts proposal for SIVA's final grade is not meant to discourage, but to motivate them. It's designed to provide constructive feedback and encourage improvement, rather than to punish for perceived shortcomings.

In summary, while the study programme has strong foundational elements, particularly in supporting disabled students and aligning with professional standards, it faces also the challenges in aligning its title and focus with student expectations, addressing high dropout rates, enhancing collaboration with the labour market, and developing a robust framework for applied research and funding attraction. Addressing these issues will be crucial for the sustainability and improvement of the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Hotel Services Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Hotel Services Management"

Short-term recommendations

1.Align Programme Title: Align the title of the study programme with the professional qualification and student/graduate expectations to reflect a focus on organisation/administration.

2.The College also needs to clarify minor details in the Diploma and Diploma Supplement. This includes correcting the qualification title to "viesnīcu pakalpojumu organizators," specifying the field of study as 'hotel service organisation,' and ensuring the correct title and study continuation options are included in the English version. Additionally, a sample Diploma Supplement for the full-time study programme should be created.

3.Enhance Study Plans: Develop individual study plans that prioritize educational methods and methodologies to support students in their specific field of study.

4. Conduct Labour Market Analysis: Conduct a comprehensive labour market analysis for the target group to better align the programme with industry needs
5. Find a methodology and approach to improve students' knowledge of English. This may need to increase the number of contact hours (lectures).
6. Update the structure and roles of the State Examination Committee. The College needs to fully regulate the process and composition of the State Examination Committee by including representatives from professional organisations or employers as chairpersons and clearly defining the roles of its members. Additionally, the Committee should consist of teachers from professional specialisation courses.
7. Clarify Internship Procedures: The College should update its internship procedures and methodologies to align with point 15 of the Standard for Vocational Higher Education and the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No 481. This includes establishing clear processes for finding internship placements, detailed internship contracts, and guidelines and templates for all required internship documents.
8. Align Curriculum Content with Professional Standard: The College should carefully assess and align curriculum content with the relevant professional standard. This involves updating annexes and course descriptions to ensure they reflect the required skills, knowledge, and competences.
9. Align Curriculum Content with Professional Standard: The College should carefully assess and align curriculum content with the relevant professional standard. This involves updating annexes and course descriptions to ensure they reflect the required skills, knowledge, and competences.
10. Improve Course Descriptions and Mapping of Study programme: The College should enhance course descriptions by clearly defining learning outcomes and ensuring they are meaningfully linked to course content and students' independent work tasks. It is also important to map these outcomes to the study programme learning outcomes in detail. Ensure the course literature lists are up-to-date.
11. Provide Sample Study Agreement for Fee-Based Studies: The College should prepare a sample study agreement for fee-based study places, even if it currently does not accept fee-paying students, to accommodate potential future changes.
12. Update Cooperation Agreements: The College should follow up and update cooperation agreements with other institutions to ensure they involve accredited and active study programmes, allowing students to continue their education seamlessly.
13. Include Free Elective Courses: The College should revise the study programme plan to include options for students to choose free elective courses, in line with the stipulations of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, allowing for greater flexibility in their studies.

Long-term recommendations

1. Increase Admissions: Implement strategies to increase student admissions and retention, addressing the low number of enrollees and high dropout rates.
2. Fund Applied Research: Secure funding for applied research and activities to enhance the academic and practical value of the programme. Applied research activities enable the use of an analytical approach to solve practical problems in the sector, and contribute to the development of the sector by dynamically adapting to changes in the external environment.

3.Ensure Programme Competitiveness: Ensure the competitiveness of the programme by creating a strategic plan that does not rely solely on state funding.

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III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:		Partially compliant	The procedures warrant the continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and its related programme, but there are some areas that need further improvements.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	There are some signs of research activities, but those are not linked with the study field and supported systematically by the College.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	Although the college has taken steps to reach a new level of collaboration locally and internationally, there is currently only little evidence of success and results that contribute to the quality of the studies.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	English language skills for academic personnel can not be assessed as sufficient. There are still a very limited number of publications since previous accreditation was done. Promotion of creative and research work of students and academic staff together with students and academic staff of similar study programmes in other Latvian colleges should be improved.

Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Hotel Services Management (41811)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

No dissenting opinions.